

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HONG K 11657 240838Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00 SSO-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 11657

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: 558 REFUGEES; LACK OF UNHCR ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY

REF: HONG KONG 11603

1. USS WHIPPLE ARRIVED HONG KONG MORNING AUGUST 24 WITH
FIRM COUNT OF 401 REFUGEES ON BOARD. PRESS IS GIVING
ARRIVAIL LARGE COVERAGE, CALLING IT GREATEST NUMBER OF
VIETNAMESE RESCUED AT SEA SINCE 1975. ON TOP OF THAT,
A HONG KONG FISHING JUNK ARRIVED SAME MORNING WITH 157
REFUGEES PICKED UP AT SEA PREVIOUS DAY.

2. HONG KONG IMMIGRATION DEPT (HKID) CONTACTED US TO ASK
IF ALL OR SOME REFUGEES ON BOARD USS WHIPPLE COULD REMAIN
ON FRIGATE UNTIL UNHCR ABLE TO LOCATE ACCOMMODATIONS. WE
REPLIED THAT WE WERE SYMPATHETIC, BUT USS WHIPPLE NOT
EQUIPPED ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES WHILE IN HONG KONG HARBOR AND
LANDING/ACCOMMODATIONS ALREADY ARRANGED. AFTER SOME
DISCUSSION IT WAS AGREED USS WHIPPLE REFUGEES
WOULD BE LANDED, BUT OFFICIAL SAID PROBABLY THE 157
REFUGEES ON THE HONG KONG JUNK WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN
ON BOARD UNTIL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THEM WERE FOUND.
HE ADDED THAT, WITH PRESS PUBLICITY, THIS WILL
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AROUSE CRITICISM AND INCREASE PRESSURE ON HONG KONG
GOVT CHANGE ITS LIBERAL REFUGEE POLICY.

3. WE LEARNED ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS THAT HONG KONG GOVT
IS INFORMING LONDON AND BRITISH EMBASSY WASHINGTON
THAT IT FEELS PENALIZED (IN COMPARISON OTHER AREA
COUNTRIES) WHAT IT TERMS ITS GENEROUS POLICY AND THAT,

UNLESS SIGNIFICANT OUTWARD MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES BEGINS
VERY SOON, IT WILL DEMAND GUARANTEES IN FUTURE FOR

REFUGEES ARRIVING ON FLAG SHIPS.

4. WE HAVE ASSURED HONG KONG GOVT THAT FUNDING IS EXPECTED
EARLY SEPTEMBER AND THAT APPROXIMATELY 100 CAT I
THROUGH III REFUGEES CAN BE EXPECTED TO MOVE SAME
MONTH. SUCH ASSURANCES HAVE BEEN UNAVAILING SINCE
HONG KONG GOVT VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THOSE MAJORITY
OF REFUGEES HERE IN CATEGORY IV WHO CANNOT MOVE.

5. AS REQUESTED IN REFTL, WE HOPE THAT DEPT WILL BE ABLE
PROVIDE AT LEAST 200 CATEGORY IV OR EQUAL AMOUNT OF
CONDITIONAL ENTRY NUMBERS IN SEPTEMBER AS SIGN TO
HONG KONG GOVT THAT ITS LIBERAL POLICY CAN BE SUPPORTED.
SHOESMITH

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